

Sport

What makes a good sports journalist

The ingredients that make a sports reporter are similar to that of a decent stew. An unorthodox comparison, but bear with us! No one dominant component brings about that delectable flavour, more a combination of everything flung into the pot. A good sports reporter possesses every kind of spice you will find in a kitchen cabinet, and more.

You can write, sure, but can you investigate? Can you sniff out a back page lead? Can you ask the hard questions? Can you go where no one else is willing to go? Above everything else, are you willing to do all of the above?

Many exceptional writers didn't or don't have the work ethic to cut it. Sports reporting does not entail sitting at your desk, waxing lyrically about your favourite soccer team.

Heck, most sports reporters have never seen the inside of an office. You are on the beat all day, every day and you have to know how to utilise that. If a local county champion is cutting the tape on some new clubhouse in the middle of nowhere, get yourself there and ask them some questions.

Come away with a story. Objectivity is another important rule. Credit where credit is due and likewise, criticise when criticism is called for. Last, but by no means least, a good sports reporter is one who is prepared to start at the bottom and work their way up.

Award winning sports journalists Keith Duggan from The Irish Times and David Coughlan from the Irish Daily Star all started somewhere and it wasn't necessarily on the pages of a national newspaper. All-Ireland finals and Six Nations clashes are covered by those with years of experience. Be prepared for U10 soccer games and schools camogie finals. The path ahead is long and winding, but know that when you eventually reach the summit, the view is out of this world.





Tips to becoming the best

Sport is news

Sports writers work to some of the tightest deadlines in journalism and are still expected to uphold all the same professional, legal and ethical standards, so having that solid foundation of what it means to be a reporter is fundamental. Sports reporting could take a journalist anywhere.

Read everything

If you want to end up as a sports journalist or, to be honest, any type of journalist, listen to the radio, monitor social media, watch TV, read the papers with as professional an eye as you can.

Follow the best in the business. Look at what they are doing.

Absorbing the styles and techniques of the best writers will not only help to influence your writing style and structure but also help to develop that eye for a story, of what is newsworthy and how to pursue it.

HAPPINESS IS by Brendan Moran

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Over to you...

- Interview a local sporting hero. Invite them to visit your class for a questions and answers session.
- Write up a match report. Go to a game of your choice, take notes, try and get a few quotes and write up your account of what happened.
- Monitor and track a live game online or on TV. Record your account.
- Interview a well known sports reporter/ columnist / editor. Talk to them about their job, how they became involved in journalism, their loves/hates etc.

Tips to becoming the best

Get the skills

The skills and knowledge employed by journalists are exactly the same as for sports journalists. The basics are the basics no matter which area of journalism you're in: speed, accuracy, diligence, hard work.

Get the experience

What potential employers are looking for is evidence on a CV that you have the motivation that journalism requires. If you're offered work experience, don't just sit in the corner looking at the internet. Go to the editors and ask: What can I do?

Finding a niche or a specialism can make the difference in a competitive world because if you can show that you are as knowledgeable as anyone else in your field – be it tennis, golf, Formula 1 or football – then you have more chance of getting commissioned or getting that first job

